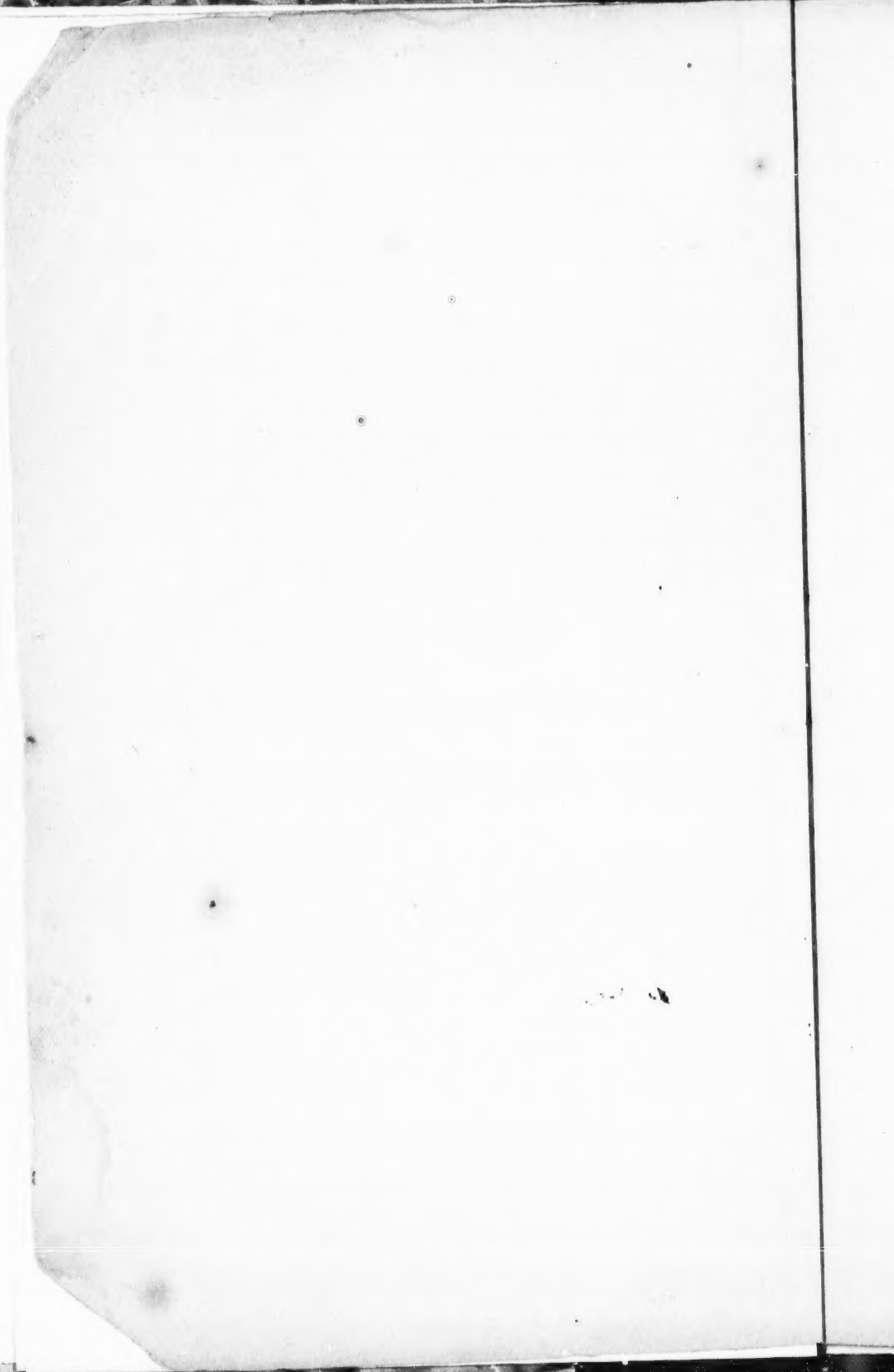




A
SERMON,

PREACHED

AT THE

OPENING OF THE CHURCH

AT

“QUIDI VIDI,”

On the Morning of Wednesday the 30th July, 1834,

BY THE

Rev. T. F. H. BRIDGE, B. A.,
Of Ch. Ch. Oxford.

St. John's:
J. M'COUBREY, PRINTER.
1834.

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Having received a request, to preach on the occasion of opening the Church at Quidi Vidi for Public Worship, I acceded to it, upon obtaining the permission of the Governor, to whom first I owe my time, as Tutor to His Excellency's Sons. Very unexpectedly, several respectable persons in this community have since conveyed to me their wish to see the Sermon I then delivered, in print. To their judgment, expressed in this wish, I cannot but show deference ;—I, therefore, send it to the press, in humble dependence upon His blessing, "whose I am," "and whom I serve in the Gospel of His Son," JESUS CHRIST.

T. F. H. B.

*Government-House, St. John's, }
31st July, 1834. }*

Isa

Peace

Isa. 26/12 "Id. Thou wilt ordain peace for us"

"HOW BEAUTIFUL UPON THE MOUNTAINS ARE THE FEET OF HIM THAT BRINGETH GOOD TIDINGS, THAT PUBLISHETH PEACE; THAT BRINGETH GOOD TIDINGS OF GOOD, THAT PUBLISHETH SALVATION; THAT SAITH UNTO ZION, 'THY GOD REIGNETH.'"—*Isaiah* LII, 7.

IT cannot fail to strike the observation of every reader, or hearer, of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, that, wherever the inspired Prophets, under the first, or Jewish, Covenant, speak of the second, or Christian, Covenant, it is, in language stamped with peculiar energy and force;—with anticipations unusually bright, unusually full of joy;—and with conceptions, enlarged, far beyond the ordinary compass and grasp of the human mind, to take in the glory of the Revelations they were commissioned to publish to the world.

Isaiah, very generally distinguished from his Brother-Seers by the title of the Evangelical Prophet, from the number and preciseness of his predictions concerning the Gospel—the Spirit of God carrying forward his view through hundreds of years yet hidden in the womb of time—foretells the greatest blessings, as the certain consequences and fruits of the Religion of JESUS CHRIST, to all who should, in truth and in sincerity of heart, embrace that holy and happy system of Faith and Worship.

Seeing these beforehand, he saith "to the prisoners, Go forth : to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves."* To the visible creation he rapturously exclaims, "Sing, O heavens ; and be joyful, O earth ; and break forth into singing, O mountains ; for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted."† He announces not the gladness of the redeemed only, but the rejoicing of the whole range of nature, upon the

* *Isaiah* xlix., 9. † *Is.* xlix., 13.

realization of his glorious visions. "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."* To express the great and prosperous change to be wrought by Christianity, he employs yet bolder figures, representing the very qualities of the earth changed—the nature of its productions changed—the characters of men, and the economy of the cities of men changed, wherever it flourishes. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree;"†—"for brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron; I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders: but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise."‡—Whilst by glowing pictures of natural fertility and abundant temporal plenty, he endeavours to convey some idea of the extent of the spiritual riches of the Messiah's Kingdom. § "Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me."§ "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our GOD."||

Of Jeremiah's prophecies concerning the establishment of Christianity, the burthen and tenor are similar; they, too, tell of liberty and life, of rest and reconciliation, of pardon and peace, of healing and gladness and prosperity, as its results. "It shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of Hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: but they shall serve the LORD their GOD, and David their King, whom I will raise up

* Isaiah lv., 12. † Is. lv., 13. ‡ Is. lx., 17, 18.
§ Is. lxv., 10. || Is. xxxv., 1, 2.

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unto them.”* “I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds.”† “Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob’s tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof; and out of them shall proceed the voice of thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry; and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few: I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. Their children also shall be as afore-time, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them.”‡ “Again, there shall be heard in this place, (which ye say shall be desolate without man and without beast, even in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate without man and without inhabitant, and without beast,) the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of Hosts; for the LORD is good; for His mercy endureth for ever; and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD.”§

Ezekiel was “moved by the Holy Ghost”|| to deliver, in corresponding strain, the promises of the LORD. “I will save my flock.”¶ “I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods; and I will make them, and the places round about my hill, a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season: there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall give her increase; and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bonds of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hands of them that served themselves of them.”* And, indeed, to whosever prophe-

* Jeremiah xxx. 8, 9. † Jeremiah xxx., 17.

‡ Jer. xxx., 18, 19, 20. § Jer. xxxiii., 10, 11.

|| 2 Peter i., 21. ¶ Ezekiel xxxiv., 22.

* Ez. xxxiv., 25, 26, 27.

cies concerning Christianity we turn, whether of Hosea, or Joel, or Zephaniah, or Zechariah, or Malachi, the last of "the glorious company" of Inspiration, we find these figures—"Dew unto Israel"—the growth of the lily†—the luxuriance of Lebanon‡—pastures in the wilderness§—the blooming fig-tree and vine||—the singing of the daughter of Zion, the shouting of Israel, the glad rejoicing of the daughter of Jerusalem¶—the rising of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings**—employed to describe at once the nature of the Religion of the Gospel, and its effects, wherever, as we have said, it should meet with an hearty and a faithful reception.

From this brief summary of Prophecy it will be observed, that the great blessing promised to mankind in the gift of Christianity, and ensured to them by its establishment, is Peace.

Now, upon an interesting occasion like the present, when, in a community, where no such thing has previously had existence, since the garden was redeemed from the forest, and the habitation of the beasts of the field made the dwelling-place of civilized and Christian man, a building is for the first time dedicated to the public service of the Almighty, for the ministration of His holy word and sacraments to all ranks and ages; and, (what is no unimportant—no insignificant, part of the public service due to God from every Christian, who is better equipped than his brethren with learning and wealth) for the education of the younger branches of the poor amongst us in Scriptural knowledge—upon such an occasion, which, to a certain extent, may be termed the establishment of Christianity in this Settlement—leaving the explanation of the circumstances, connected with the getting up of this Building, to others, whose proper province that becomes from their active and generous exertions in the cause—it may not be an unprofitable exercise for us, to consider, with some attention, this Peace, which

* Hosea xiv., 5; also, Mic. v., 7.

† Hos. xiv., 5. See also Cant. ii., 2. ‡ Hosea xiv., 5, 6, 7.

§ Joel ii., 22. || Joel ii., 22.

¶ Zephaniah iii., 14. Zechariah ii., 10, ix., 9.

* Malachi iv., 2.

God has promised by Himself, and of which all His prophets have prophesied. It will not be so, if to Him, whose ear is ever open "to hear His faithful people which call upon him," we offer the prayers of our hearts—the prayers, as it were, of one united heart—for His favour upon the work we have in hand, that it may prosper as the fountain of blessings, which shall not fail during time, and shall continue throughout eternity, to ourselves, our children, and our children's children.

Beseeching, then, this—beseeching, too, a plenteous and perpetual rain of the Divine increase upon whatever His Ministers shall deliver to His people conformable to His word and will, we proceed to remark, in connection with our subject, that all the glowing anticipations of Prophecy for the future imply that the past was full of misery, and wo, and darkness. Peace to come necessarily implies previous warfare;—future reconciliation, former separation and estrangement;—the looking for rest, the existence hitherto of turmoil, distress, and inquietude;—prospective fertility, failure and barrenness aforesaid;—the expectation of freedom presupposes bondage and slavery; and the promise of forgiveness includes an offence given!—and such exactly was the case, it is now before us to review! For this is its history:—a history, we will here warn you to bear in mind, not resting on the mere sand of human authority for its truth; but whose truth is the revealed Truth of the eternal and unchangeable Godhead; whilst its sanction is the whole scheme of Divine Providence from the birth of Creation down to the present hour, as it has been developed by "the workings of His mighty power,"* both general and special, in all ages, and in all the events of all ages;—alike in the times of Adam, and Noah, and the Patriarchs;—in the times of the incarnate Immanuel;—and in our own times; equally in the "putting man a living soul into the garden of Eden;"†—in the sacrifice "of the only-begotten of the Father;"‡—and in the conversion of any transgressor, blind and obstinate and "dead in trespasses and

* Ephes. i., 19 † Genesis ii., 7, 15.

‡ John i., 14.

sins,"* to teachableness, light, and life.—This, then, is the history of the case. There were two parties, GOD and man, both holy ;—GOD the Creator, holy, and man the creature, "made in the image, after the likeness"† of the Creator, also holy. In this state of mutual holiness, all was mutual harmony and good-will ; and there was obedience on the part of man. But in an evil hour man, the creature, listened, alas ! to the voice of one, who was anxious to interrupt this harmony, and destroy this good-will, and annihilate this obedience !

The arguments of the subtle Tempter prevailed ;—and man, in the vain and proud and unholy pursuit after undue exaltation, ‡ through the inconsistent desire of becoming a God, fell, instantly fell, far below the rank which had been assigned him in the scale of created things ;—he sank at once to the disgrace and depravity of a Devil ! He defied the power that had formed him ; pushed away the hand that had continued to supply and support him ; forgot the blessings and the privileges that encompassed him, and their munificent Giver ;—§ the produce of the teeming ground, all, but in one little instance, his own ; and this unsought, unlaboured for ;—"the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, and every living thing that moved upon the earth,"|| all under his "dominion," all at his free disposal ;—in a word, he became an ingrate to his Benefactor, a traitor to his King, a rebel against his God !

Thus, man made war against GOD ; and GOD necessarily set His face against man ; we say, necessarily, because, though a Being of infinite Mercy, He is also a Being of perfect Justice, and of consummate Purity ; and such ¶ Justice cannot overlook the wilful transgression of its enactments, and let it go unpunished ;—such * Purity cannot behold with complacency "the worker of iniquity."

Here, then, we see the bond of Friendship severed ; the treaty of alliance, and covenant of unity, at an end ; and one party was

* Eph. ii., 1. † Genesis i., 26. ‡ Gen. iii., 5.
§ Gen. i., 29, ii., 16, 17. || Gen. i. 28.
¶ Ps. lxxxix., 14. Rev. xv., 2. * Hab. 1., 13.

demanding, as atonement for their disruption and violation, and at the same time as indispensable to a renewal of them, a satisfaction, which the other party was now, through his transgression, utterly incapable of rendering. We have before said, and we would remind you of it here, that these two parties were **GOD** and man; —**GOD**, Almighty, able to do every thing, “able to destroy both soul and body in Hell;” * man, weak, not able to do anything, † either to preserve his body, ‡ or to redeem his soul. What a condition, consequently, was that of man! What a fearful condition! An omnipotent **GOD** against him with demands he could not satisfy: and upon him, besides this curse, “Thou shalt surely die,” § (which did not simply denounce temporal death, the separation of soul and body, but included with that, eternal death, that is, the eternal tormenting of both soul and body, in the deathful regions of Hell!) whilst he could not by himself escape from the infliction of these, the just, wages of his sin! At the consideration of this, again are we constrained to exclaim, What a melancholy present! what a dreary future! War—estrangement—and no known method of reconciliation and peace!

But at this crisis, interposed the Divine Mercy and Wisdom, with a scheme, capable at once of satisfying the Divine Justice, and of relieving human wretchedness. Instantly were heard the glad tidings of Peace: under the Old Testament, promises and prophecies, as we have seen, conveyed them to the world—such glad tidings as these,—all the evil consequences of man’s disobedience were to be remedied; barrenness to be superseded by blooming plenty; poverty by riches; separation by union; enmity by friendship. Years rolled on,—the light that emanated from, the hope engendered by, these announcements, cheering, in the midst of surrounding gloom and darkness, the heart of every faithful Believer. And then, “when the fulness of time was come,” according to the plan and counsels of His will, “**GOD**,” in ful-

* Matt. x., 28.

† Matt. vi., 27, and following verses.

‡ Psalm xlix., 7, and 15. § Genesis ii., 17.

filament of all, "sent forth His son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;"* of which gracious purposes, the heralds, under the New Testament, were the angelic choir, hymning among the stars of Heaven that joyful song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace; good-will towards men;"† and the Elijah-like Baptist, exclaiming in the rapture of inspiration, while his heart was glowing with love and gratitude to the LORD for His mercy, "Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."‡

We here arrive at the great point. All men were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel;"§ "strangers from the covenants of promise;"|| "enemies in their mind by wicked works:"¶ all men must have remained so; but "GOD was in CHRIST, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."*

These "good tidings of great joy,"† promised from the beginning by the direct assurances of the Almighty himself; foretold by the Prophets He from time to time raised up, and filled with His spirit, to publish peace; announced by the Heavenly Ministers of His high behests; confirmed by His Evangelists, and illuminated by His Apostles;—"these good tidings of great joy" thus authorised and sanctioned, we, who are "Ambassadors for CHRIST"‡ now deliver unto you. We tell you, we tell every sinner, of a Saviour, with whom is abundant mercy,—"with whom is plenteous redemption;"§ and, as "stewards of the manifold grace of GOD,"|| we proffer to all freely of that grace, which He hath, with the utmost condescension, pledged Himself to give, and which He will give to every soul that seeketh it aright, "in faith, nothing wavering,"¶ and upon the merits of His crucified son, JESUS CHRIST!

* Gal. iv., 4. † Luke ii., 14. ‡ John i., 29.
 § Eph. ii., 12. || Ibid. ¶ Col. i., 21.
 * 2 Cor. v. 19. † Luke ii., 10.
 ‡ 2 Cor. v., 20. § Ps. cxxx., 7.
 || 1 Pet. iv., 10. ¶ James ii., 6.

But you may say, we talk of peace, and yet call you enemies;—of pardon, and yet call you sinners. It is true, we remind you of your inherited corruption; of your natural weakness; of your unrighteousness; of your perverted and wandering affections; of your souls, diseased, and unproductive of good fruits. We remind you, too, of your many adversaries,—the adversaries of your peace and opposers of your best interests;—the world with its fascinations, the flesh with its passions, and the devil with his subtleties.

But is this to frighten you only, and alarm you? to cast you down into the depths of despair and hopelessness, and into a careless apathy about exerting yourselves against your foes? No: but to assure you, upon the authority of the Book of Truth, that “a fountain has been opened for sin and for uncleanness,”* to wash it all away; that unrighteous as man is, there is one, who “is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;”† weak as man is, One, whose ‡ grace can make your weakness, strength; a § Physician, who can heal all your sickness; a || Shepherd, who will “gather the fainting lambs of his flock with his arm, and carry them in his bosom,”¶ and bring all his sheep, wherever scattered, into * “one,” and that the true, “fold;” and a “Sun of Righteousness,”† whose beams brought into your bosoms by His Holy Spirit and Comforter, can make the most barren heart amongst us bloom like a garden with the fruits of eternal life:—to assure you, further, that there is one “waiting”‡ to be on your side, through whom you must have the victory, and be “more than conquerors,”§ over all your adversaries!

Why, when we behold the wasting form, the fading cheek, and the sinking eye of some dear relation or friend, himself, perhaps, not conscious of these symptoms, or, at least, not conscious of all they betoken,—why do we communicate to such an one our fears, that

* Zech. xiii., 1. † Rom. x., 4.

† 2 Cor. xii., 9. Hebr. xi., 34. § Matt. ix., 12.

|| Hebr. xiii., 20. ¶ Isaiah xl., 11.

* John x., 16. † Malachi iv., 2. † Isaiah xxx., 18.

§ Rom. viii., 37.

the seeds of decay and death are striking root in his frame? Is it not, that he may be induced to go for advice and relief to one, who, is thought competent to help the body in the day of its infirmity? If we were to see a fellow-creature on the edge of a precipice, when one step more in the direction he was pursuing, must dash him to atoms, why should we call upon him to stop and turn? Would not our object be, to rescue him from the destruction that was before him?—Upon precisely the same principle the Ministers of Religion set before men the sinfulness of their nature, to warn them of the dangers to which it exposes them; to warn them of the Hell, which yawns beneath impenitence and unbelief, and to bring them to lean upon that arm, which only can keep them from falling! Upon this principle, we preach to men their utter inability to earn by their own works the Salvation of their souls, that we may caution them against erecting the house of their future hopes upon the sandy foundation of their own righteousness,—the unstable base of their own “goodness, which is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away;” * whilst we persuade them, under the Divine blessing, to build for Eternity upon “the Rock of ages,” †—“upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST himself, being the chief corner-stone,” ‡—that, when “the flood arise, and the stream beat violently upon that house, it may not be shaken.” §

O, would that this may be the end of our present preaching! It is with this object, and none other, that we this day exhort you, my Brethren, to make the privileges of the Gospel your own; to flee unto its promises for “a covert from the tempest” || of the Divine wrath, and “to lay hold upon the hope it sets before us—as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast;” ¶—that we this day, more than exhort you,—affectionately invite you to this;—yea, that we bid you to it;—for it is not in our own name, but in the name of the GOD we all profess to worship,—of the Saviour we all profess to know!

* Hosea vi., 4. † Isaiah xxvi., 4. Marginal translation.
‡ Ephes. ii., 20. § Luke vi., 48. || Isaiah xxxii., 2.
¶ Hebr. vi., 18, 19.

Thus sanctioned, we offer Salvation to the lost, to the condemned redemption; to the sick healing, and to the guilty pardon; water in the desert, and in the wilderness plenty; to the hungry food, and drink to the thirsty,—“wine and milk without money, and without price:”—*—in a word, we declare unto you, (and the Bible is our authority,) that JESUS CHRIST, invested with †“an unchangeable priesthood,” is both “able,” and willing, “to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Such, then, being the way to “life and immortality brought to light”‡ by the Divine author of the Gospel:—“I am the way, and the truth, and the life;”§—“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the HOLY GHOST,”|| let us briefly inquire, as a concluding exercise, what should be, —what must be,—the practical consequences of this doctrine, rightly received, and thoroughly engrafted into the hearts of men. Will the belief, is the question we would ask, that the works of human righteousness are no meritorious causes of Salvation, engender the notion, that the performance of such good works, as man is rendered capable of by Divine co-operation, in conformity with the Divine Law, is unnecessary? Let what will be said, is our reply, depend upon it, that man is very much mistaken in this doctrine, who ridicules and rejects it as the source of licentiousness; and he may with safety be pronounced not yet to have been brought into that Spiritual frame of mind, in which only “the things of the Spirit of God”¶ are discerned. Depend upon it, too, that man is also very much mistaken in this doctrine, who, continuing in iniquity, shelters himself under it, as secure from the threatened vengeance of God against sin; and he will find to his cost one day, that it is “not every one that saith LORD, LORD, who shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but he that doeth the will of his Father which is in Heaven.”* For it cannot be

* Isaiah lv., 1. † Hebr. vii., 24-25. ‡ 2 Tim. i., 10.

§ John xiv., 6. || Titus iii., 5. ¶ 1 Cor. ii., 14. * Matt. vii., 21.

satisfactorily contradicted, that the perception of the free mercy of "God in CHRIST," arising from the conviction of human sinfulness, and the feeling of man's need of a Saviour, leads on to the perception of the necessity of the best obedience man can render to the Law, as at once the produce "springing out necessarily of a true and lively Faith,"* and some return to God for all His undeserved kindness.

Understand, therefore, my Hearers, that you are solemnly charged by "the Truth as it is in JESUS,"† to "live diligently after His commandments." The Salvation, purchased for you by the blood of the Lamb, imposes upon you the obligation of including in your daily practice, (as far as lieth in you, and your respective conditions demand of you,) the whole circle of duties embraced by the Moral Law;—requiring of you, that you be faithful as husbands and wives; watchful parents and obedient children; affectionate in the relationship of brothers and sisters; considerate masters, honest and diligent servants, kind and charitable neighbours; in a word, that you be good Christians, "thoroughly furnished unto all good works."‡

I might here enter into a detailed explanation of all these duties; but I deem it enough to say a few words upon one, which the event of to-day seems to suggest, as the most appropriate subject of remark and exhortation. From the circumstance, that heretofore, such of you as are inhabitants of this Settlement and its neighbourhood, have not been blessed with a House of God amongst you, it may have resulted, that here the due observance of the Sabbath has grown into much neglect and disuse. Of the past, however, in this respect, it is not my intention to speak, further than to exhort all, who may be conscious to themselves of having overlooked the commandment to "keep holy the Seventh-day," that they both fervently and frequently ask of the Almighty Being, who § hallowed it from the beginning, His forgiveness of that transgression!

* xii. Article. † Ephes. iv., 21.

‡ 2 Tim. iii., 17. § Gen. ii., 2, 3.

I would speak rather of the time to come ; and most solemnly do I call upon you all, henceforth to remember that day, which has been set apart, both by Divine appointment, and the universal usage of the Christian Church, to be a continual memorial of the two greatest blessings of God to man,—the completion of His work of Creation, and the accomplishment of His work of Redemption by the Resurrection of Himself from the grave,—that day, do I call upon you all, to remember henceforth, and to honour it with that decency of behaviour which God has enjoined ; *abstaining upon it from all manner of work, and presenting yourselves before the LORD, whenever opportunity occurs, in the Courts of His house !

The Sabbath here,—the weekly day of rest upon Earth,—is but a figure and fore-runner of the Eternal Sabbath, and day of never-ending “ rest, that remaineth to the people of God”† in Heaven. If, then, you have no taste for worshipping and praising God in His Earthly Sanctuaries, do you think you will find any enjoyment in the “ New Jerusalem,”‡ among the companies of Angels and Saints,

“ Who all day long unwearied sing
High glory to th' Eternal King ?”§

Do you think, if God has seen you reluctant to go up to His temple below, He will translate you, when you die, to His temple above ?—Doubt not, even were it to be so, Heaven itself would be a Hell to you, so little would you be suited by the occupations you have followed, and the propensities you have indulged here, for its pleasures and pursuits !

* See Exod. xx., 10. † Hebr. iv., 19.

‡ Rev. xxi., 2. § Morning Hymn.